

# The Gryphon



The Newsletter of the Friends of the  
Osborne and Lillian H. Smith Collections

Fall 2020

Patron: Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra,  
The Hon. Lady Ogilvy



## FROM THE CHAIR

When the Friends began supporting digitization of Osborne materials, we had no idea how useful this would turn out to be in a global pandemic. Over the last several years, thousands of Osborne items have been digitized, thanks to very generous support from the Robertson Foundation and from donations by many of you.

Of course, we knew that digitized materials offered access to the collection for anyone who could not visit in person. We did not foresee digital jigsaw puzzles! In June, the Toronto Public Library created seventy digital puzzles drawn from its special collections, including several from the Osborne, such as Mabel Dearmer's *Seven Young Goslings* or the 1919 Children's Book Week poster. (<https://torontopubliclibrary.typepad.com/local-history-genealogy/2020/05/pieces-of-history-35-digital-puzzles-of-items-in-our-special-collections.html>) They have proved very popular—to some (ahem), even addictive.

Digitized materials have also been used in several delightful blogs by TPL staff exploring five fairy tales; homeschooling advice from the eighteenth century; and drawing instruction. (See Senior Department

Head Sephora Henderson's report, "From the Collection" [page 3], for links.)

It has been wonderful to see how the digitized material has been used to inform and entertain. The Friends are exploring how we can further the development of digital jigsaws and other fun offerings. In the meantime, a hearty thank-you to all of you for your support for the

digitization work at the Osborne.

Amidst the cancellations, closures, and uncertainty of the last few months, there have been other bright spots, including the launch of the Friends' redesigned website (<https://www.osbornecollection.ca/>). With a fresh new look, useful and up-to-date information, and links to important TPL pages, the site gives visitors both a picture of

## Welcome to the Osborne Collection!

The Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books has four main areas of concentration. The Osborne Collection itself contains literature published before 1910. The Lillian H. Smith Collection comprises books of literary and artistic merit published in English from 1910 onward. The Canadiana Collection is a selection of 19th- and 20th-century children's books in English, related to Canada, or whose authors, illustrators, or publishers are associated with Canada. The Jean Thomson Collection of Original Art has over 5,000 original illustrations for children's books in watercolour, pen-and-ink, woodcut, multimedia, and many other media.

As part of the Toronto Public Library system, the Collection is open and available to all. [torontopubliclibrary.ca/osborne/](https://torontopubliclibrary.ca/osborne/)

[facebook.com/Friends-of-the-Osborne-Collection-of-Early-Childrens-Books-177552168943174/](https://facebook.com/Friends-of-the-Osborne-Collection-of-Early-Childrens-Books-177552168943174/) \* [osbornecollection.ca](https://osbornecollection.ca)

Email the Friends at: [FriendsOsborne@gmail.com](mailto:FriendsOsborne@gmail.com).

Lillian H. Smith Branch/ Toronto Public Library, 239 College Street, Toronto, ON, M5T 1R5, 416-393-7753. Hours are on the website. Membership and donation details are on page 12 of this newsletter.

what the Friends do and an enticing look at the collection itself. Many thanks to talented designer Shirley Fairley and to Friends Executive member Maggie Knaus, who shepherded us through the process. Note: The TPL has also done a refresh on its special collection pages and the Osborne's own site is now more accessible and appealing.

Sadly, the Albert and Clara Lahmer Memorial Lecture by Lindsay Mattick ("Finding Winnie") was cancelled when the Toronto Public Library shut down during the first stages of the COVID-19 emergency. I am delighted to report that it is in the process of being rescheduled to 2021.

While we had hoped that the fall 2020 lectures could go ahead, we accepted the inevitable in July, and moved the Sybille Pantazzi Memorial Lecture and the Helen E. Stubbs Memorial Lecture to 2021.

I had been looking forward to hearing Governor General's Award-winning illustrator and author Jillian Tamaki give the Pantazzi lecture and to hearing the Stubbs Lecture by much acclaimed author Kathy Stinson (whose archives are housed at the Osborne). I know that feeling was shared by many of you and it is disappointing to have to wait for a safer situation, pandemic-wise. However, I look forward to enjoying the words of these superbly talented creators in the not too distant future.

When the new dates for all three lectures are set, we will keep you informed on our website and our Facebook page and via email to all members on our emailing list.

Belated but very hearty congratulations to the Children's Book History Society, which marked its fiftieth anniversary last fall. Our sister organization in the UK was



Kathy Stinson, author of over 30 books, most recently *The Lady with the Books*.



Photo: Emma McIntyre

Illustrator and author Jillian Tamaki's latest book is *Our Little Kitchen*.

founded in 1969, as the Friends of the Osborne and Lillian H. Smith Collections British Branch, following a 1967 visit to London by the Osborne's Judith St. John. The celebration took place during the CBHS's annual study day—always an interesting and thought-provoking conference. This year's theme was Families in Children's Literature and the program included papers on Mrs. Molesworth, E. Nesbit, the work of the British Society for Nursery Rhyme reform, as well as Dame Jacqueline Wilson's talk "Missing Mothers." A celebratory fiftieth-birthday cake featured Little Goody Two Shoes



Image courtesy of the Toronto Public Library

One of the diverting digital jigsaw puzzles.

in icing. Between this cake and the Friends' gryphon cookies for Jane Dobell's celebration last September, 2019 was a good year for children's-literature culinary expression. Let's hope that 2021 will allow us events with further food fun and opportunities to gather.

Our annual membership form is enclosed with this issue of *The Gryphon*. If you would like to receive our email updates, please be sure to provide your address on the form. If you have questions about any of the Friends activities, contact us at [FriendsOsborne@gmail.com](mailto:FriendsOsborne@gmail.com).

—Gillian O'Reilly

## The Osborne Collection Reopens

On September 14, Osborne reopened. New protocols are in place to ensure the health and safety of all staff and visitors. See the website (front page of this newsletter) for details.

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## FROM THE COLLECTION

The beginning of the calendar year at the Osborne Collection is an exciting time. The tasks of the previous year have been successfully completed and checked off the to-do list, and as we look forward to the numerous new opportunities of the year ahead, there is a sense of anticipation. Time notwithstanding, there is the steadfast commitment to excellence in public service, which remains the cornerstone of all our efforts.

Although we have patterns, trends, and statistics that help us to forecast the likelihood of what is to come, there are simply some things for which we cannot plan. That is what happened in the middle of March 2020 when TPL closed its branches to support efforts to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus. We could not foresee such a situation—but the response on the part of the library staff has demonstrated that once again TPL is flexible, resilient, dedicated to public service, and strong.

Many come to visit the Collection and view the in-house exhibits which are carefully curated by Osborne staff over the course of the year, and we often have the opportunity to showcase Osborne materials at the TD Gallery in the Toronto Reference Library. This year was no exception. From November 16, 2019, to January 26, 2020, the TD Gallery featured the exhibit *You, Me, Us: Outstanding Books For and About Young People with Disabilities*, which included several original artworks from Sidney Smith's *Sidewalk Flowers*. The following exhibit, which launched on February 15, 2020, was *The Art of the Book*, showcasing beautiful

books from Osborne featuring decorative bindings and gilding.

You can see more about the two exhibits here:

[www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/programs-and-classes/exhibits/you-me-us.jsp](http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/programs-and-classes/exhibits/you-me-us.jsp)

[www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/programs-and-classes/exhibits/art-of-the-book.jsp](http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/programs-and-classes/exhibits/art-of-the-book.jsp)

Digital Collections Technician Richard Mohammed surpassed a milestone in February 2020, having personally digitized over 5,000 items from the Osborne Collection. We are grateful for the ongoing and generous donations of Friends members and other donors who make this possible, allowing us to share the materials far beyond the physical collection. Digitization also serves to preserve and maintain the items for the future.

With the help of Digital Content Lead David Sprague, and through consultation with staff, the Osborne Collection webpage on the TPL website has a fresh new look. The content is streamlined to optimize viewing from mobile devices, and content can be easily accessed without navigating away from the page. Visitors can collapse and expand sections of interest, and can find in one place all the relevant information about the Collection, including details of exhibits and programs.

Class visits and Book a Librarian sessions got off to a robust start, with staff delivering ten sessions up to the time of the closure. Topics included the history of the Osborne Collection, introduction to resources, book illustration and picture books, art collections, movable books, Victorian children's

books, and a review of various archives. Participants included academics, professional authors and illustrators, tourists, and students.

Several staff members continue to work from home, and we all look forward to returning to our workspaces as soon as it is safe to do so. I look forward to welcoming you all to the Osborne Collection once again, and in the meantime I hope you will enjoy some of our virtual resources and digitized content.

<https://torontopubliclibrary.typepad.com/trl/2020/05/five-digitized-fairy-tales-from-our-early-childrens-books-collection.html>

[https://torontopubliclibrary.typepad.com/arts\\_culture/2020/05/vintage-homeschooling-advice-from-our-early-childrens-book-collection.html](https://torontopubliclibrary.typepad.com/arts_culture/2020/05/vintage-homeschooling-advice-from-our-early-childrens-book-collection.html)

[www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/programs-and-classes/exhibits/trl-exhibits-past.jsp](http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/programs-and-classes/exhibits/trl-exhibits-past.jsp)

—Sephora W. Henderson



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## LOUIS WAIN: THE MAN WHO DREW SCHIZOPHRENIA CATS

Louis Wain (1860–1939) is a figure whose mental illness is discussed as often as his art. He was a commercial artist who sold thousands of drawings of cats for decades before WWI, becoming famous for his work published in *Illustrated London News*. In the 1920s, he was diagnosed as a schizophrenic and involuntarily hospitalized.

While he is known best for his lovable depictions of cats (including Osborne's recent *Catland* acquisition), psychology textbooks use his work to demonstrate the deteriorating mind of someone afflicted with schizophrenia. His early joyful and anthropomorphic cats devolve (so the story goes) into the abstract, frantically colourful, fractalized feline images that he produced in his later years at the Napsbury Hospital (formerly the Middlesex County Asylum) in London Colney (a village in Hertfordshire, England). Psychologist Francis Reitman used Wain as an example of schizophrenic art in a 1950 text called *Psychotic Art*. Recently, this text has been widely criticized (along with most early psychology texts). Reitman's theory that the schizophrenia diagnosis would predict a decline of Wain's artistic skill (Reitman theorized that the disease was strictly organic, i.e., a result of a deterioration of the brain) has been questioned for the fact that the intricacy of Wain's later work cannot be properly categorized as a decline. According to Reitman, "Art, then, is a manifestation of human brain functions." (*Insanity, Art, and Culture*, 1954, p. 9)

For my part, I want to take a step back from that discussion, to subject it to a philosophical analysis, and in doing so, to redeem the humanity of an artist who serves so often as *an example of* that we forget to consider him as an individual—an individual whose art expresses a developing worldview, whose images invoke an undeniable emotional response (an affection for the cats of his early work, an aversion to the sinister cats of his middle work, and a scholarly interest in the texturized cats of his late work), and whose insight shouldn't be dismissed either because of his mental illness or because of his choice of subject—the mere fact that he chose mainly to draw cats.

We (humans casting a retrospective glance upon the history of art and literature) love to pathologize our artists. While we credit artists with unique viewpoints from which they observe the world, we also have a tendency to identify those unique worldviews as

one of the known sorts of deviation—to go back and diagnose our favourite artists with mental illnesses. And by identifying and labeling those deviations, we bring them into our concept of what is known and, therefore, what is normal. But in doing so, we take what we first identified as *unique* and reduce it to something mundane—an example of the human mind unhinged. What we've done to Louis Wain is a most egregious example of this tendency. I surmise that the motive behind labelling Wain's cats as the art of a schizophrenic is to account for him, to bring him into the sphere of the known, and to thereby lay claim to some insight into his work that we might not otherwise have had. But, having explained him away as simply a man with schizophrenia, we set his individuality aside as well, or allow it to come second to a prosaic medical diagnosis.

Now there is something to be said for the naming and labelling of deviations. I know many individuals whose mental health diagnoses have provided them with assurance—that there is a name for what they are experiencing, that what they are experiencing is known to others, and that what they thought might exclude them from the human experience is, instead, a known variation of the human experience familiar to many. That is to say, by naming and labelling deviations, we bring them into the realm of the normal. For some, that's a good thing. It isn't clear from the available biographies whether Wain found any such comfort from his diagnosis, and the artwork he produced after he was committed to an asylum seems to suggest the opposite. But the same pathologizing of experience that I characterized with regard to Wain as a negative experience is, to others, a positive experience. When casting a retrospective glance on an artist whose lived experience is so much more than a deviation, however, we must be careful not to explain away the person.

The difference is in the details. And I'm arguing that there is a big difference between being a schizophrenic and being *just* a schizophrenic, and that scholarship on Louis Wain is tending dangerously toward conceiving of him as the latter.

Hannah Gadsby, the art historian and comedian whose *Nanette* gained viral fame in 2018, released another special this year, called *Douglas* (named after the Pouch of Douglas and in which she discusses, among other things, autism and art history). Integrating her art history training into her comedy, she points to

famous works of art that have seemingly inexplicable aberrations and proclaims, “That was a decision.” This statement expresses the inescapable truth about works of art that we seem to forget when we pathologize away the intent of the artist—that is, the fact that producing artworks takes time. It takes a protracted effort on the part of the artist, and if there is, in fact, an expression of dread on the face of one of Louis Wain’s middle period cats, it’s because he spent many hours putting it there. (I’m defining his “middle period” loosely as the period after which he stopped producing commercial art and during the early years of his hospitalizations, when his work was characterized by cats that are still realistic, but appear sinister or aggressive, for example, the cats of “The Fire of the Mind Agitates the Atmosphere.”)



(Image from Wikimedia Commons, public domain.)

As Wain’s art developed, he tended away from the realistic (as realistic as anthropomorphic depictions of cats can be) cats of *Catland* and toward the abstract, colourful, patterned cats of his later years, like these untitled cat drawings:



(Images from Wikimedia Commons, public domain.)

Each of these patterns must have been carefully planned and executed. This is why some scholars have argued against the idea that he suffered from a schizophrenic disorder—precisely because such disorder isn’t evident in his work, which instead becomes all the more ordered over time, with these careful patterns. But what if, instead, we admit that Wain was an individual, over and above any disorder he may have had? With a societal progression toward destigmatizing mental health issues, it seems an idea we should entertain.

If Wain’s later work represents schizophrenia, it isn’t because his artworks somehow unintentionally fell out of his mental illness. It’s because he showed it to us. He drew the mind’s unbinding first through representations of violence and persecution, recognizable in the faces of his non-commercial cats, and then by representing the annihilation of the limiting concepts through which the so-called normal mind perceives the world, by showing us cats with unrecognizable anatomy, cats that can’t be properly distinguished from any environment, such that it’s not clear where the cat starts and the world ends. And yet he did so in a way such that we might still recognize them as cats, albeit cats of no known or even possible type or species—and with a superlative technical skill and unique aesthetic. Not just an illness, but a man who happened to have an illness. An artist whose skill at both painting and at packaging the human condition into comprehensible images for general consumption should be valued, perhaps more highly because of the adversity Wain faced. It isn’t every schizophrenic whose love of cats has so beguiled us for a century. And if his work does serve as an example of the progression of a mental illness, we should consider that it is because he meant it to.

—Charlene Elsby

The Osborne Collection holds these works by Louis Wain (as well as a few others, not yet digitized):

[www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/search.jsp?N=38537&view=grid&Erp=20&Ntt=louis+wain](http://www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/search.jsp?N=38537&view=grid&Erp=20&Ntt=louis+wain)

*Note:* Due to coronavirus-related restrictions, some images for this article could not be sourced from the Osborne Collection and thus have been drawn from Wikimedia Commons.

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## CARLE HONOREES

Congratulations to Patricia Aldana and Justin G. Schiller, who were named as Honorees in the 2021 Carle Honors by the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art (Amherst, Massachusetts).

Receiving the Mentor Honor is Patricia Aldana, founder of Groundwood Books, the archives of which are held by the Osborne Collection. The Carle Honors committee stated, “Patricia Aldana is a renowned children’s book publisher who has devoted her career to bringing new voices to picture books. She is the founder of Groundwood Books, Past President of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), President of the IBBY Trust, and Publisher of Aldana Libros, an imprint of Greystone Kids.”

Longtime Friend—and friend—of the Osborne Collection Justin G. Schiller was honoured, together with Dennis M. V. David, in the Bridge category. The committee stated, “Dennis M. V. David and Justin G. Schiller, founders of Battledore Ltd., enjoy a combined hundred-year career as dealers in rare and collectible children’s books, related original illustration art, and manuscripts. Together they contribute pioneering scholarship in the field of children’s literature and illustration, and play seminal, behind-the-scenes roles as builders of many of the field’s major research collections.”

The Honorees are chosen annually by a committee chaired by children’s literature historian and critic Leonard S. Marcus. There are four award categories. Artist: someone who has been a lifelong innovator in the field. Angel: a person whose generous contributions have been key in bringing to fruition illustrated children’s book art exhibitions, education programs, and related projects. Mentor: editors, designers, and educators who promote and work within the art form. And Bridge: individuals or organizations who have found inspired ways to bring the art of the picture book to larger audiences through work in other fields.

<https://www.carlemuseum.org/content/2021-carle-honors-honorees-announced>

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## IN MEMORIAM: PROFESSOR DOUGLAS CHAMBERS

1939–2020

Professor Emeritus (English Literature),  
University of Toronto

A longtime Friends member and donor, Professor Chambers gave a lecture, “The Boy on a Horse,” that became the first “occasional paper” (i.e., not a Stubbs lecture) for the Osborne in April 1998. Professor Chambers taught children’s literature at the University of Toronto; a former student has noted that his standards were admirably high. She recalls him as having been “not only a fount of knowledge, but also a dynamic lecturer who enjoyed challenging [us].”



Photo: Chrissie Walker, courtesy of Toronto Public Library

Even the gryphons are taking the pandemic seriously!

Yes, the gryphons at TPL’s Lillian H. Smith branch have been taking precautions in the summer of 2020. Did you know that these wonderful beasts have names?

They were designed and constructed by architect Philip H. Carter and sculptor Ludzer Vandermolten. The lion-headed one is named Edgar, after our own Edgar Osborne; and the eagle-headed one, Judith, is named after Judith Merril, whose collection formed the basis of the Merril Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation and Fantasy.

You can read more about the gryphons here:

[https://torontopubliclibrary.typepad.com/arts\\_culture/2016/06/you-say-gryphon-i-say-griffin.html](https://torontopubliclibrary.typepad.com/arts_culture/2016/06/you-say-gryphon-i-say-griffin.html).



## A TALK WITH YUKA KAJIHARA-NOLAN



Photo courtesy of Yuka Kajihara-Nolan

Yuka Kajihara-Nolan with L. M. Montgomery in Leaskdale.

Yuka Kajihara-Nolan has had many different titles since she began working for the Toronto Public Library in 1988: from stock taker to special collections assistant to Osborne assistant. Presently, her position is Public Service Assistant; in this role she is involved in a variety of activities and projects, including setting up and taking down exhibitions, and helping to prepare materials for cataloguing and digitizing parts of the Osborne Collection. She's the person who can find and retrieve books and materials located in the Osborne stacks when they have been misplaced—a rare occurrence, but quickly remedied by Yuka! She especially enjoys solving reference questions and giving tours to visitors from Japan, where she is originally from. Outside the Osborne Collection, she is interested in Canadian author L. M. Montgomery as a research subject; she regularly writes articles about Montgomery for Japanese publications. As well, before the COVID-19 pandemic, she enjoyed weekly visits with Japanese Canadian elders to talk with them in her (and their) mother tongue. Her other literary involvements outside the Osborne Collection include being an editorial board member of the *Journal of L. M. Montgomery Studies* ([journaloflmmontgomerystudies.ca/editorial-board](http://journaloflmmontgomerystudies.ca/editorial-board)), as well as being a long-term supporter of the

Lucy Maud Montgomery Society of Ontario (<http://lucymaudmontgomery.ca>). Over the past few years, she has started bringing Japanese tourists to the village of Leaskdale where L. M. Montgomery lived for about fifteen years. In addition, she has for many years written articles on cats and literature for a Japanese publication called *The Cat Journal* ([www.nekoshinbun.com](http://www.nekoshinbun.com)). With the retirement of Liz Derbecker earlier this year, Yuka is now the longest-serving staff member at the Osborne. Some of the Friends may remember that Yuka's name has appeared in the newsletters as long ago as fall 2008 and March 1997.

### 1. How did you become interested in/involved with the Osborne Collection?

I am originally from Kagoshima City, Japan. After graduating from a national university in a southern city [where she completed a BA with a thesis on children's literature], I moved to Tokyo to work for an advertisement company. And there I met my future husband who happened to be from Toronto, and I eventually moved to the city in 1988. My Osborne journey started when one of his friends, Liz Derbecker, introduced me to an available position at the collection.

### 2. Do you have a favourite item or book in the Collection? What is it, and why is it your favourite?

It is very hard for me to choose one out of approximately 90,000 items. I love the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century chapbooks and writing sheets with hand-coloured illustrations, which, unfortunately, were probably created using child labour. The eighteenth-century books bound with Dutch gilt paper are beautiful. John Marshall's *The Infant's Library* is a very attractive item—a wooden box containing sixteen miniature books. Handwritten letters by Beatrix Potter and L. M. Montgomery are also favourites.

### 3. Do you have a favourite event or memory you could share about the Osborne Collection?

The summer of 2009 was so memorable to me. That was when Japan's [then] Empress Emerita Michiko visited the Osborne. I was trembling when she graciously approached the Osborne staff to have a brief conversation. Having the opportunity to meet with a member of Japan's royal family was unthinkable to me.

I was glad that I did not faint in front of her! (For more details, see: [https://torontopubliclibrary.typepad.com/news\\_releases/2009/07/imperial-visit-to-osborne-collection.html](https://torontopubliclibrary.typepad.com/news_releases/2009/07/imperial-visit-to-osborne-collection.html).)

Another memory was when J. K. Rowling came to visit the Osborne Collection. It was after hours and no one knew it was going to happen. I was pretty much flabbergasted by her visit. We shook hands. I remember her British accent and her gentle smile.

#### 4. What, in your opinion, is the best thing about the Osborne Collection?

What makes the Osborne Collection so unique is that this special collection is housed in a public institute that is actually open to the public. Visitors do not even require a library card. Everyone is welcome. One of my sweetest memories is when, a long time ago, an older woman came to see picture books of cows. After looking through several books, she chose one of the cows illustrated by Randolph Caldecott and copied the image in her notebook. A few months later, she came back with her grandson. What a surprise! The little boy's sweater was exactly patterned on that Caldecott cow! Visitors often teach us new ways of using materials from the collection.

#### 5. What can be challenging about the Osborne Collection?

The Osborne holds so many precious and unique items. I feel that preserving and protecting them for future generations is challenging. Promoting the collection for present users is another challenge in making use of new technologies. In the present COVID-19 period, people are relying more on the information available online. The digitized items from the Osborne are even more useful for scholars and general users. Thanks to the support of the Friends, the collection is more accessible and available to the public.

#### 6. What do you want people who are not familiar with the Osborne Collection to know about it?

The Osborne contains elements of a library, a museum, an art gallery, and an amusement park. I want people to drop by and see the collection. Have a look at the video *Why Visit the Osborne Collection in Toronto?*

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6xYJNR0FoY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6xYJNR0FoY)

#### 7. What do you like to read?

I tend to read the books written by L. M. Montgomery's favourite authors: Andersen, Austen, Barrie, the Brontës, Dickens, Kipling, and so on. My present favourite authors are Kazuo Ishiguro and Atsuko Suga.

Both Ishiguro and Suga were born in Japan and later moved to different countries; Ishiguro grew up in England and Suga lived in Italy. Maybe because of it, they have a sense of *l'étrange* and I feel their sensitivities and passions even in their serene writing. I love books that take me far from reality, to a mysterious wonderland. These authors are somehow very successful in doing this.

#### 8. Do you have any childhood favourite books?

One particular Japanese picture book, *Looking for the Owl*, stuck in my mind just because my older sister used to read it for me. We sat side by side peeking at the book. It was written by Mimei Ogawa, generally known as Japan's Hans Christian Andersen. I loved animal-themed stories by Hugh Lofting, Ernest Seton, and Hatoju Muku. Lofting made me laugh; Seton made me surprised; Muku made me cry. I also adored playful Pippi Longstocking.

—Interview by Karri K. Yano

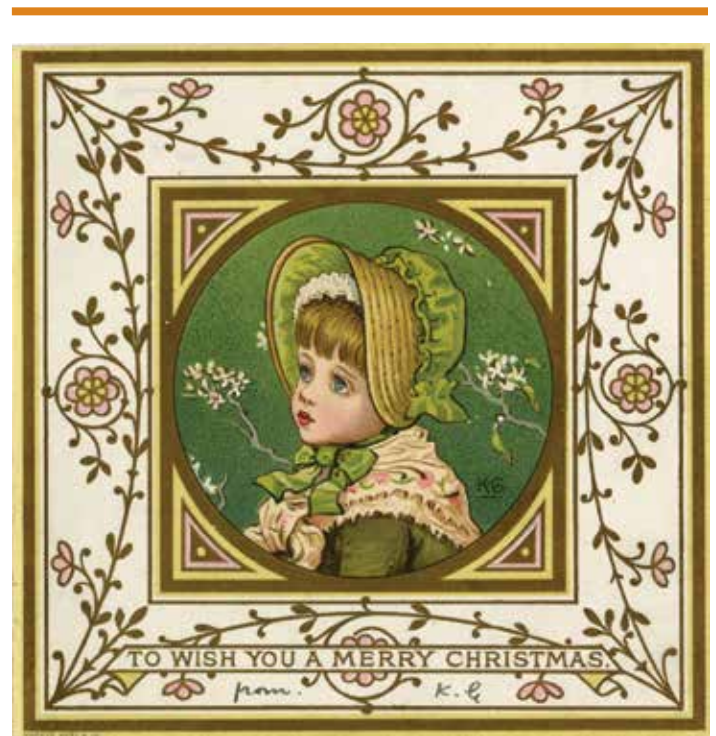
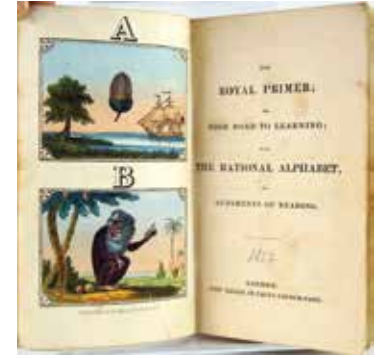


Image courtesy of the Toronto Public Library

Christmas season is still a ways off, but some of us are already thinking about what cards we'll send this year! Here's a charming example of a historical card, from the Osborne's collection of ephemera.



## NOTABLE ACQUISITIONS

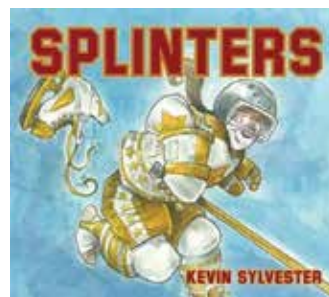


### Arthur's Alphabet

*Arthur's Alphabet* (London: Routledge, c. 1865) is a charming primer providing moral lessons for each letter of the alphabet. This piece focuses on the character of Arthur, a young boy who engages in play, sibling interactions, and other activities, including being penalized for his acts of selfishness. Arthur overcomes his misdeeds and learns lessons of gratitude, forgiveness, and generosity. Each letter of the alphabet provides examples of its uppercase and lowercase form, and uses hand colouring to highlight the uppercase letter. Elements incorporated into each letter's illustration were intended to engage and entertain children in their lessons.

### Picture Alphabet of Nations of the World

*Picture Alphabet of Nations of the World* (London & Edinburgh: T. Nelson and Sons, c. 1870) is a fine copy of an alphabet primer intended to instruct children and expand their knowledge of nations around the world. Presented from a colonial perspective, examples of each nation are provided in a chromolithographic illustration paired with a short poem. Acquisition of this material is intended to provide examples of historic representation and the subject matter being taught to nineteenth-century children.

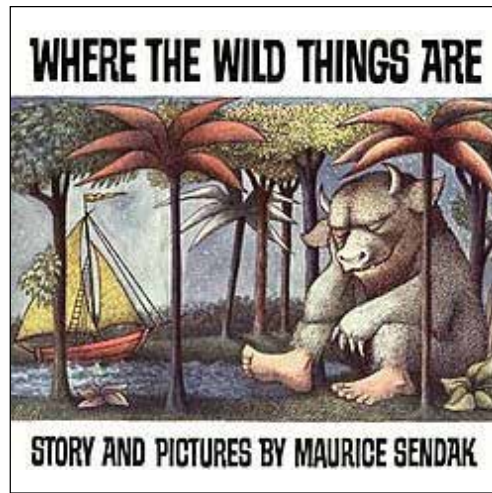


### The Royal Primer; or, High Road to Learning; with the Rational Alphabet, or, Rudiments of Reading

*The Royal Primer; or, High Road to Learning; with the Rational Alphabet, or, Rudiments of Reading* (London: John Harris, c. 1840) is a beautiful alphabet primer offering both instruction and entertainment. The subject matter is approached two ways—one set of letters is presented using illustrations primarily of animals in a scenic setting, and a second set using an array of commonly found and familiar examples. The primer also includes an additional six reading lessons consisting of useful phrases. All illustrations included in this primer are lithographed and coloured plates, making it a vibrant addition to the Osborne's collection of primers.

### Splinters

The Osborne's Jean Thomson Collection of Original Book Art was established in 1977 to honour the memory of Jean Thomson, former Head of Boys and Girls Services at the Toronto Public Library. A number of valuable and wonderful additions have been added to this collection starting with a generous donation from Canadian award-winning writer, illustrator, and broadcaster Kevin Sylvester, who donated nineteen original final draft watercolour artworks from his book *Splinters* (Toronto: Tundra, September 2010). The watercolours are wonderfully charming in their modern spin on the classic Cinderella fairy tale, with a healthy sprinkle of hockey incorporated. Cindy's skate gets left behind at the hockey rink when she runs out of time as the final buzzer hits, but will Coach Prince find her amazing mystery player? Readers will have to get a copy of Sylvester's book to find out, or come to the Osborne Collection to see the original watercolour illustrations.



### The Generous Fish

Our next set of artworks has been generously donated by Canadian illustrator Frances Tyrrell from her most recent work for *The Generous Fish* (Bloomington, IN: Wisdom Tales, 2020), which contains all the watercolour artwork and pieces for the entire book. Frances Tyrrell is known for exceptionally intricate and detailed illustrations, and has crafted a beautiful set of images in a story inspired by Jewish folklore, that implores readers to see the connection between humans and nature. The story begins with Reuven, a young boy who starts a friendship with a fish that has magical golden scales. The golden fish gives Reuven its scales to help him and his fellow villagers pay for things, except everyone wants a scale and takes more than the golden fish can give, leaving the fish weak. Reuven is forced to evaluate his and the villagers' actions, and ponder how he can save his friend.

### Pat Garrett and Maurice Sendak

On her death in December 2018, Pat Garrett, longtime Friend of the Osborne Collection, and co-founder of the Children's Books History Society (known as the British branch of the Friends of the Osborne & Lillian H. Smith Collections) bequeathed a very generous donation to the collection that has been used to purchase three original Maurice Sendak (1928–2012) illustrations. Author and illustrator Maurice Sendak has strong and longstanding roots in the Osborne Collection, as he visited the Toronto Public Library's Boys and Girls House branch in 1969 and gifted the collection with an original pen-and-ink drawing of the gryphon to be used as our cherished emblem. Staff felt the similarity between Sendak's and Garrett's long histories with the collection, their respective achievements, and their

passion for children's books and children's-book history tied together beautifully.

When the rare opportunity to purchase original Sendak artworks presented itself, staff leaped at the chance to secure pieces; because Sendak donated all of his original book illustrations to the Rosenbach Foundation in Philadelphia, there is very little left available for purchase. The first art piece is a graphite sketch of a Wild Thing from Sendak's iconic *Where the Wild Things Are*, designed for a Japanese American Express campaign: the Wild Thing has its paw hooked over a fence, holding a blank card-like spot on vellum/thick tracing paper. Another impressive attribute of this original piece is its immense size, measuring 48 x 35.6 cm. By comparison, most Sendak illustrations tend to be small or found within books.

The next two original illustrations feature Sendak's character Rosie, who was based on his childhood observations, while growing up in Brooklyn, of a demonstrative little girl who used to sing and dance on the stoop of her building. The first Rosie art piece is a framed and matted 35.6 x 35.6 cm original graphite illustration on thick vellum/thick tracing paper featuring a concept drawing of Sendak's Rosie, the title character from the 1974 animated version of *Really Rosie*. The character is drawn with a worried expression, staring forward directly at the viewer with her hands clenched around her boa. The second Rosie illustration is a 29 x 20 cm pen-and-ink drawing on off-white paper that features a full-length image of Rosie in her signature boa and feathered hat with a speech balloon that reads: "Hello (from), Rosie and M. Sendak." All three original pieces are signed and dated by the late Maurice Sendak.



**Pop-Up****LEGO® Ideas 21315 Pop-up Book**

The toymakers of LEGO® have worked together to produce a fully functioning movable book that is made entirely out of LEGO bricks. The *LEGO® Ideas 21315 Pop-up Book* set includes a total of 859 individual bricks, which staff immediately starting assembling. The fully constructed book, titled *Once Upon a Brick*, will be showcased during future class visits.

This interactive showpiece is an excellent addition to the Osborne Collection's assortment of movable books, featuring depictions of two fairy tales, Little Red Riding Hood and Jack and the Beanstalk. This unique piece was conceptualized by Grant Davis, a LEGO® fan and engineering student who appreciated the mechanics involved in the construction of movable books.

Software developer and fellow LEGO® fan Jason Allewyn joined Davis in designing and constructing the final touches before they submitted the design to the LEGO® Idea series, which offers a platform for fans like Davis and Allewyn; designs that are selected are created for production. LEGO® designer Wesley Alan Talbott and graphic designer Crystal Marie Fontan were brought in to finesse the production.

The set features LEGO® minifigures of Little Red Riding Hood, Grandmother, the Wolf, and the Giant, and a LEGO® microfigure of Jack; all were designed specifically for this interactive set. Featuring beautifully detailed elements that bring each fairy tale to life, the three-dimensional construct can be viewed from every angle. Davis's and Allewyn's names are fittingly presented on the book cover. It is an absolute delight for fans of LEGO®, fairy tales, and movable books.

*Little Red Riding Hood* elements include a bed that fits the Wolf and Grandmother minifigures, and a peek through the moving door and windows that enable Little Red Riding Hood to inspect her grandmother from a distance and discover her true identity. *Jack and the Beanstalk's* depiction has a working beanstalk that grows before your eyes, allowing builders/players to give life to the set, and also fosters open-ended creative play by presenting a platform to build your own unique stories. The movable book expands from 20 cm x 13 cm when closed to over 20 cm x 28 cm when open.

—Jennifer Yan

**Dating Undated Books**

Have you ever come across an old book without a publication date or copyright date visible anywhere? Not on the copyright page, not on the title page, nowhere else that you can find? There were various times in the history of publishing when including the publication date was not standardized. As well, some design-heavy art books from certain periods don't have a recognizable copyright or title page and with these, too, determining how old they are/when they were published can be quite difficult. Sometimes Internet research on the authors and artists and on the publisher is helpful. There are also qualities of the paper, illustrations, and cover materials that when examined can help identify at least a general time period. Font choices can also provide clues. Sometimes the name of the printer has been included in the front or back of the book. If the dates in which the printer was in business can be found (online or in a library) that can, again, at least help to narrow down the date to a general time period.

Do other collectors out there have any tips for this head-scratcher?

If you'd like to read a bit of what's been written on this topic, see: <https://stellabooks.com/article/how-to-date-a-book>.



Image courtesy of the Toronto Public Library

A random pretty shoe to think of when wearing hefty winter boots!





“Lords and Ladies” (wild arum). Medici wildflower series postcard. English, 1949. A delightful reminder of spring as we head into the winter months. You can read more about this plant at: [www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?PID=981](http://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?PID=981).

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Charlene Elsby** has a Ph.D. in philosophy from McMaster University and was recently a tenure-track professor. She is the author of *Hexis* (Clash Books, 2020), *Affect* (The Porcupine’s Quill, 2020), and *Alison* (Clash Books, 2021). She is working on a manuscript that refers to Louis Wain.

**Sephora W. Henderson** is a reader, polyglot, musician, and magic enthusiast. She is the Senior Department Head of the Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Books, and also of the Merrill Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation and Fantasy.

**Gillian O’Reilly** is an award-winning non-fiction author and the former editor of *Canadian Children’s Book News*.

**Jennifer Yan** is a General Librarian with the Osborne Collection, but at the time of her contributing to the “Notable Acquisitions” she was the Acting Services Specialist.

**Karri Yano** lives in Toronto, where she writes and edits educational material, and teaches piano. In her spare time, she writes plays and plays the harpsichord.



Please send ideas for articles as well as general comments or questions to: [FriendsOsborne@gmail.com](mailto:FriendsOsborne@gmail.com).

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